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Title: Need to provide financial assistance to the fruit & paddy growers who lost their crops due to heavy hailstorm in Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh.

SHRI ANANTHA VENKATARAMI REDDY (ANANTAPUR): The recent unexpected and unprecedented hailstorm in Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh has resulted in very heavy damages to crops in this drought-prone district. The sudden hailstorm in the last week with high velocity gale has seriously affected the crop of mango, banana, oranges and sapota in the district. Due to shortage of water, the farmers in this district tend towards growing of fruits which need less water. The banana and orange crop was almost ready for harvesting when the nature has turned its fury on them. Before the farmers could recover from this, unexpectedly there was very heavy gale at very high velocity last week because of which banana crop and also mango trees have been uprooted. In succession, within a period of a fortnight, there have been three incidents of heavy hailstorm and gale in Anantapur district alone and the banana crop in more than 3,000 acres in the district has been completely destroyed. This has resulted in a loss of more than Rs. Fifteen crore to the farmers in Anantapur district.

The investment by the farmers in these banana, mango and orange crops is heavy and the compensation being offered by the State Government is much less and does not meet even a small percentage of the investment made. The Central Government should consider giving insurance coverage to these crops. There should be a national policy for providing insurance coverage in cases of such natural calamities for horticulture products. The Government may also consider including the work of clearing the debris caused by such natural fury under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA so that there could be some solace to the farmers.

The Government should provide immediate financial assistance to the farmers who have lost their banana, orange, sapota and paddy crops in this unexpected hailstorm in the district.